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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [HK](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: ANSON CHAN JOINS WITH DEMOCRATS IN URGING PUBLIC
TO TURN OUT FOR JULY 1 DEMOCRACY MARCH

REF: HONG KONG 1819

Classified By: E/P Chief Simon Schuchat. Reasons: 1.4(b,d).

11. (C) Summary: On July 25, former Chief Secretary Anson Chan announced that she would join the July 1 pro-democracy march and urged Hong Kongers to turn out for the rally. Appearing in a joint press conference with fourteen democratic legislators, Chan denied that her decision to participate in Saturday's demonstration was linked to a possible Chief Executive (CE) campaign bid or that she wanted to play a leading role in the democracy movement. Instead, she emphasized her belief that democracy was the best form of government for Hong Kong. When asked about a possible run for CE, Chan was coy: "I want to wait and see before I decide on my next step, as even I don't know what will happen over the next few months." Chan also urged CE Donald Tsang to fight for democracy and to be more inclusive of all political parties. Chan's announcement was clearly intended to boost attendance for Saturday's demonstration; organizers hope an additional 20,000-30,000 people will join the march. While many democrats welcomed Chan's announcement, a few were more suspicious of her political motivations. End Summary.

Chan's Participation in July 1 Rally to Boost Turnout

12. (C) On July 25, former Chief Secretary Anson Chan announced that she would join the July 1 pro-democracy march and urged Hong Kongers to turn out for the rally. This will be Chan's first appearance at a July 1 march since the pro-democracy tradition began in 2003, but her second time participating in a democracy rally. Appearing in a joint press conference with fourteen democratic legislators, Chan denied that her decision to participate in Saturday's demonstration was linked to a possible Chief Executive (CE) campaign bid or that she wanted to play a leading role in the democracy movement. Instead, Chan underscored her support for democracy and said that her participation in Saturday's rally was due to her belief that "the only possible and the best foundation for Hong Kong is democracy and direct elections." When asked about a possible run for CE, Chan coyly replied, "I want to wait and see before I decide on my next step, as even I don't know what will happen over the next few months." (Comment: We were not surprised by Chan's announcement; media speculation that she would march has been widespread in recent days. We had also heard in the past week from reliable sources that she planned to join the July 1 march. End Comment.)

13. (C) During her press conference, Chan disclosed that she had phoned CE Donald Tsang on June 24 -- Tsang's first anniversary in office -- to inform him of her decision to

join the July 1 march. She did not reveal Tsang's reaction to her call. She added that she hoped Tsang would not take her action as confrontational. Chan told reporters that she did not want to comment on Tsang's performance, then pointed out several areas for improvement. Chan urged Tsang to be more inclusive of all political parties "even if they have different views;" a clear criticism of Tsang's "core partnership" with the pro-Beijing party, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) (see reftel). Pan-democrats, said Chan, also needed to improve their cooperation with the Government. Chan also hit out at the Commission on Strategic Development, a Government advisory body authorized by Tsang to look into the issue of political reform. She pressed the Commission to put forward more concrete recommendations on promoting universal suffrage. And finally, Chan said, "Mr. Tsang should show more effort and courage to fight for democracy."

Government Takes Low Key Approach

14. (SBU) A government spokesperson told the press that the development of democracy was the common goal of the Hong Kong and Central Governments and the community at large. Financial Secretary Henry Tang was quoted as saying that he respected Chan's decision and added that people had the freedom of speech and expression.

Democrats Torn Between Joy and Suspicion

15. (SBU) The joint announcement by Chan and democratic legislators was clearly intended to boost attendance for Saturday's demonstration. With last year's attendance

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estimated between 17,000 and 21,000, Chan's participation might encourage an additional 20,000-30,000 people to join the demonstration, said rally organizers. Democratic legislator Lee Cheuk-yan told poloff on June 26 that the democrats were happy about Chan's announcement, especially if it boosted interest and participation in the July 1 demonstration. The one week lead-time of Chan's announcement and the actual march should allow organizers sufficient time to capitalize on Chan's participation and help mobilize supporters. Former Chairman of the Democratic Party Martin Lee told the press conference that he welcomed Chan's participation in the demonstration. "Two years ago, nobody could have expected that Donald Tsang would become our Chief Executive. Likewise, a year ago, I would have not have expected that Mrs. Chan would join this press conference. I hope that a year later, Donald will also sit here with us to strive for Hong Kong's full democracy."

16. (SBU) Chan's announcement was not welcomed by all democrats, however. Several democrats who did not participate in the June 25 press conference expressed concern about Chan's motives. Independent democratic legislators Albert Chan and Frederick Fung reportedly said that they had reservations about cooperating with Chan in promoting the July 1 rally as it might distort the meaning of the democracy march, since the media attention might be focused on whether she might join the CE race. Another independent democratic legislator, Albert Cheng, said that there was no need for the democrats to "deify" Chan or turn the democracy movement into an anti-Donald Tsang campaign.

17. (C) On June 26, Chinese University of Hong Kong Professor Timothy Wong speculated to poloff that Chan's high profile decision to participate in the July 1 march was not merely just a reflection of her democratic aspirations, but also had a political element to it. There might be behind the scenes maneuverings regarding Chan's decision to run for CE and her participation in the July 1 march and criticisms of Donald Tsang might be part of a broader scheme, said Wong. While

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the democrats will certainly benefit from Chan's participation in Saturday's march, Chan will probably also benefit from the exposure, said Wong.

Cunningham